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ARTICLES:

(1) Foreign Minister Okada says idea of merging Futenma with Kadena Air Base is "not his personal opinion"

ASAHI (Page 1) (Full)
Evening, October 29, 2009

Representative interpellation on Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's policy speech to the Diet also began at the House of Councillors plenary session on Oct. 29. The relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa was one of the topics discussed.

Yoshimasa Hayashi, Liberal Democratic Party policy officer in the Upper House, raised a question on the conflicting statements of cabinet ministers on Futenma relocation and asked Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada: "Were your statements that the relocation of the Futenma base out of Okinawa would be difficult and that the merger of Futenma with Kadena Air Base is an option your personal opinion?"

Okada responded: "Those were statements made in my capacity as foreign minister. However, I did say in my news conference that it was a provisional proposal that had not been agreed upon by the cabinet." He added: "Thirteen years have passed (since the agreement on Futenma's return). We would like to avoid spending more time on this issue. However, on the other hand, we are seriously considering whether there are other options that can reduce the burden on Okinawa even more than the existing plan. The proposal to merge Futenma with the Kadena base, where existing runways can be utilized, emerged in this process. We are currently examining this option. We would like to reach a conclusion at an early date based on the result."

However, during a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima, Okinawa City Mayor Mitsuko Tomon, and Ginowan City Mayor Yoichi Iha before the Upper House plenary session, Okada had said that the idea of merging Futenma with Kadena "is being considered as a personal proposal, and the government has not decided on this."

(2) Senior ruling coalition member presents to Kadena a draft

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proposal for integrating Futenma heliport into Kadena Air Base with 15-year deadline attached

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 1) (Full)
October 29, 2009S

It was learned yesterday that a senior government-ruling coalition member had presented in early October to the town of Kadena a draft proposal on the integration of the heliport functions of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station into the U.S. Kadena Air Base with a 15-year deadline on the period of use of the base by the U.S. military, with the goal of relocating the Futenma base out of Japan. The draft proposal reportedly has been relayed to high government officials.

The government has been verifying the current Futenma relocation plan agreed by the former governments of Japan and the United States. In the process of finding a final direction, the draft proposal might become a main issue in discussion. However, it is certain that residents and municipalities surrounding Kadena Air Base, including the town of Kadena, will strongly react.

The draft proposal had been examined by some lawmakers in the government and ruling parties. According to a government official, the draft proposal stipulates that at the time when the Futenma heliport facilities would be integrated into Kadena Air Base, the Japanese government and the Okinawa prefectural government would sign a memorandum stipulating that the period of the use of Kadena Air Base by the U.S. military would be limited to 15 years. The draft proposal also stipulates that the central government should conclude environmental agreements with the surrounding municipalities as an expression of consideration for local residents, who are concerned about the expansion of the base facilities.

In an attempt to reduce noise, the draft proposal stipulates that 28 F-15 fighters based at Kadena Air Base would be transferred; exercises of non-Okinawa-based aircraft would be prohibited; and Self-Defense Forces' fighters would not be transferred to the base. In addition, the draft proposal includes that within one year the cabinet would decide on five proposals: (1) cancelling the plan to relocate the Futenma base to the Henoko district; (2) shutting down the Futenma base; (3) the return of U.S. bases south of Kadena Air Base; and (4) drawing up economic rehabilitation measures for all

Okinawa through a new base realignment plan.

The draft proposal stipulates that the final relocation site for the Futenma base would be Guam or the mainland U.S.

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, who in fact has given up on relocating the Futenma base out of Okinawa, expressed the intention to seriously look into the possibility of integrating the heliport functions of Futenma into Kadena Air Base. He has expressed his intention to hold talks with the U.S. side and local municipalities.

Meanwhile, Chatan Mayor Masaharu Noguni, chair of the Liaison Group of Three Municipalities on Kadena Air Base, comprising the towns of Kadena and Chatan and Okinawa City, has strongly opposed the idea of integrating the Futenma base into Kadena Air Base.

(3) Okinawa becoming impatient with unresolved Futenma Air Station

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relocation issue

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
October 29, 2009

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and related cabinet ministers have expressed different views on the propriety of reviewing the plan to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station to the coastal part of Camp Schwab in Henoko, Nago City, Okinawa Prefecture. Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima and several others on Oct. 28 visited Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) and pressed the government to settle the issue at an early date. Hirano, however, simply reiterated, "The prime will make the final decision," indicating that the government is in a state of disarray as it searches for options other than the existing plan.

At the Kantei on the evening of the 28th, Nakaima pressed Hirano, saying: "There are various views, such as the one incorporated in the manifesto. However, the people of Okinawa cannot see what course the issue will take. If the government is going to switch its policy, please do it properly and promptly."

The meeting was held for the Okinawa Prefecture military land conversion and base issue committee set up by Okinawa Prefecture and base-related municipalities to ask for the settlement of the Futenma issue. Eight persons, including Mayor Yoichi Iha of Ginowan City, which hosts Futenma Air Station, participated in the meeting.

Nakaima on the 26th released a comment, which said: "If the government presents a plan to relocate the Futenma functions outside the prefecture in a realistic and specific way, we strongly hope that the plan will be materialized." They have thus shifted from their previous stance of accepting the relocation within the prefecture.

This comment can be attributed to the fact that Nakaima is becoming impatient with the Hatoyama administration, which is in disarray with various cabinet ministers voicing different views on the issue. Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa on the 27th hinted at his readiness to accept the present plan, saying, "(Implementing the existing plan) will not contradict the policy pledge." However, Hatoyama and Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada brushed aside Kitazawa's statement. Okada announced a position to coordinate with the U.S. on an idea to integrate Futenma Air Station into Kadena Air Base in Kadena, Okinawa Prefecture.

However, Kadena Town Assembly on the 28th unanimously adopted a motion seeking the withdrawal of the Kadena integration idea. A dark cloud has been hanging over the Kadena plan even before talks with the U.S. have begun.

Nakaima and others asked to see the prime minister. However, Hatoyama did not meet them, asking Hirano to meet them instead.

To the press corps, Hatoyama stressed: "I will make the final

decision. I would like the cabinet ministers to act in accordance with my decision."

Main statements recently made by cabinet ministers over Futenma relocation issue

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Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama: I will make the final decision. Since we are now searching for new options, it will take a fair amount of time (to reach a final decision). I do not think I must rush to reach a final decision, just because U.S. President Obama will visit Japan (in November). (to the press corps in Thailand on the 24th).

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada: Could Kadena be an alternative site? I believe so. There are great advantages to consolidating two major military bases into Japan. Under the present plan, two bases will become permanent. (at a press conference on the 27th)

Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa: It is slightly wrong to think that (the present plan) does not meet our (DPJ) pledge (to relocate the Futenma Air Station out of the nation or the prefecture) at all.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano: If related ministers' statements are going to cause concern to the U.S., I would like them to make statements a little more modestly and carefully. The prime minister will make a decision at an appropriate time. (at a press conference on the 27th)

State Minister for Consumer Affairs and Declining Birth Rate Mizuho Fukushima: The agreement on the coalition government stipulates that from the perspective of reducing the burden of the people of Okinawa, (the government) will challenge the issue of realizing the desired nature of the US Forces Japan with a possibility of revising the Futenma relocation plan. The government should settle the Futenma issue from the standpoint of reducing the burden on the people of Okinawa.

(4) "Seiron" column: DPJ urged to make Futenma-relocation decision based on national interest this autumn

SANKEI (Page 7) (Full)
October 29, 2009

Toshio Watanabe, president of Takushoku University

Conditions ripe for a solution

There is a game called "chie no wa (wire puzzle)" consisting of manipulating two linked metal rings in various ways to separate them. The moment one succeeds in separating the rings is indeed exhilarating. At that moment you are surprised it was so easy. But just try to separate the rings a second time.

I believe that in diplomacy there is also such a moment when conditions favorable for resolving the toughest of all tough issues coincide to facilitate an easy solution at one particular instant. Now is probably the best time ever for a solution to Okinawa issues. I had an opportunity to talk with Governor Hirokazu Nakaima at length in mid-October when I was invited to participate as a panelist in a symposium organized by the Junior Chamber International Japan. Mr. Nakaima lamented that "Okinawa has already decided on what it wishes to do, but unless the government is able to decide on a policy at an early date, Okinawa is unable to act." While this sounded like a complaint, I nodded in agreement with his characteristic candid remark.

Both Okinawa Prefecture and Nago City have come to support the basic plan agreed upon between Japan and the U.S. on the condition that

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the runways are moved farther offshore. The two governments reached agreement in May 2006 on a package deal including the relocation of

the U.S. Marines' Futenma Air Station to the coastal area of Camp Schwab in Nago City, the relocation of 8,000 Marines and their families in Okinawa to Guam, the transfer of carrier-based aircraft from Atsugi to Iwakuni, and the complete return of six military facilities in the southern part of the main island of Okinawa. Japan has also made a commitment to shoulder a maximum of 2.8 billion dollars of the cost for the implementation of these plans.

Adverse effect of complicated public opinion in Okinawa

I am, of course, aware of the extremely complicated trend in public opinion in Okinawa. However, more than ever before, in their desire for a major reduction in the burden of the bases people in Okinawa and Nago are leaning in the direction of accepting the Japan-U.S. agreement. Against the background of North Korea's two underground nuclear tests and China's gaining control of the East China Sea through a massive naval expansion, Okinawans perhaps feel that any further aggravation of the Futenma issue might present a real possibility of undermining Japan's security.

During his recent visit to Japan, Secretary Robert Gates said repeatedly at his meetings with senior officials of the new Hatoyama administration that unless relocation to the Futenma replacement facility in the coastal area of Camp Schwab is implemented, there will be no relocation of the Marines to Guam, and the complete return of the six facilities located in the densely-populated southern part of Okinawa will not be possible. Mr. Gates approached the new administration of Japan with a strategy of striking a balance between military deterrence in the Far East and reducing the burden on Okinawa.

The new Japanese administration is the obstacle to the "agreement" between Okinawa and the U.S. This is truly ironic. Even during Mr. Gates's visit, which was meant to prepare for President Obama's visit in November, the new administration's real intentions remained unclear, with the Prime Minister saying that he wants to confirm the consensus in Okinawa through the outcome of the Nago mayoral election and the Okinawa gubernatorial race next year; the Foreign Minister stating that a decision will come after "verifying the appropriateness of the Japan-U.S. agreement"; and the Defense Minister telling reporters that "there is not the luxury of spending a lot of time."

Public opinion is complicated in Okinawa. There is no guarantee that candidates in favor of relocation within Okinawa will win in the forthcoming mayoral and gubernatorial elections. If such candidates lose, the chance of a lifetime to resolve the Okinawa issue will be lost. It is impossible to verify the appropriateness of the Japan-U.S. agreement at present, since agreements are products of the convergence of political vectors at a specific point in time, and the conditions have changed since then. How meaningful will such an exercise be? If the conclusion that arises from this process is that the bilateral agreement is inappropriate, the U.S. side is unlikely to accept such a conclusion.

Without mutual trust the alliance will become hollow

The U.S.'s position is that the proposal to integrate the Futenma base with Kadena Air Base is a plan that has already been examined. If the government fails to even react to Mr. Gates's statements

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implying that moving the runways farther offshore is an issue between Okinawa and Tokyo, what will ensue is a "hollowing out" of the Japan-U.S. alliance. It is possible that the U.S. will then choose China, not Japan, as its trusted partner in Asia. A G-2 framework, which has the deep-rooted support of advisers to the U.S. Democratic Party, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, may no longer be a mere pipe dream. In the first place, a one-sided Japan-U.S. alliance in which Japan is unable to boldly exercise the right of collective self-defense is by nature vulnerable in the post-Cold War era.

I do not believe that the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) really intends to further weaken the already weak bilateral alliance. The Japan-U.S. alliance is no longer merely an alliance governing bilateral relations between Japan and the U.S. today. It is the only

alliance serving as a safeguard against North Korea issues, the Taiwan Strait issue, and above all, China's naval build-up. It is the only alliance for maintaining the stability of Far East Asia as a whole. The collapse of the Japan-U.S. alliance could trigger a "domino effect" in the Far East.

Now is the rare point in time when the conditions for the sudden separation of the two rings in a "wire puzzle" long thought to be hard to crack are in place. Gentlemen of the DPJ, set your eyes on the national interest. This autumn is the time to decide.

(5) Editorial: Prime Minister's leadership not visible in Futenma issue

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 5) (Full)
October 29, 2009

It appears that a change of administration has not yet occurred in the Ministry of Defense. Were the pledges in the manifesto of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) merely sweet talk meant to win popular support during the House of Representatives election?

We are talking about Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa's remarks on the relocation of the Futenma Air Base. He said that the implementation of the plan to relocate the Futenma base to Henoko inherited from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-New Komeito administration does not contradict the DPJ's campaign pledge.

Defense Minister Kitazawa cited the relocation of some 8,000 Marines to Guam and the relocation of air tankers to the U.S. forces' Iwakuni base (in Yamaguchi Prefecture) as examples and claimed that "it is wrong to say that (the Futenma relocation plan) does not fulfill the pledge to relocate (the Futenma base) out of Okinawa or out of Japan at all."

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has promised that the base will "at least be relocated out of Okinawa." He was, of course, talking about the relocation site for the Futenma base. Defense Minister Kitazawa's statement amounts to reversing this, which is absurd.

Defense Minister Kitazawa's reasoning would mean that the LDP-New Komeito administration was already implementing the DPJ's pledge (even before the change of administration). Was he speaking under pressure from bureaucrats obsessed with the Henoko plan?

Even Prime Minister Hatoyama and Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada questioned his statement. This was undoubtedly a far-fetched argument.

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Foreign Minister Okada, who criticized Defense Minister Kitazawa, has also given up quickly on relocation out of Okinawa and come up with a plan to merge the Futenma base with Kadena Air Base. The two ministers contradict each other. What's going on in the Hatoyama cabinet?

Every time the ministers of defense and foreign affairs say something, anxiety increases in the local community and people are affected in various ways. It is highly irregular for the prime minister and the ministers of defense and foreign affairs to all say different things.

Prime Minister Hatoyama stated at the representative interpellation yesterday: "We are currently conducting a comprehensive review. After carefully examining the process leading up to the Japan-U.S. agreement, I will make the final decision on relocation." This would seem to be an expression of his determination. Yet, major discrepancies have surfaced among his own ministers. This would seem to be a good time for the Prime Minister to step forward and mediate actively, but he doesn't appear to be doing that. His presence is weak. He must not forget that his own leadership ability is being tested.

Prime Minister Hatoyama stated in his policy speech to the Diet that "the burdens, suffering and sorrow borne by the people of Okinawa

will be properly considered, and the feelings of the people will be sincerely taken to heart," indicating his stance of dealing with the Okinawa issues seriously. How does he propose to translate this into action? We hope that he reflect deeply on his own statement that the Futenma base should "at least be relocated out of Okinawa."

The same policy speech also talked about the politicians' responsibility for increasing distrust in politics. The two ministers' statements may indeed give rise to distrust of politics among the Okinawan people.

With regard to the discord among the ministers, it is understandable that Governor Hirokazu Nakaima has expressed his anger by saying: "Okinawa is not the backyard of the incumbent cabinet ministers."

The Kadena Town Assembly promptly passed a unanimous motion opposing the plan to integrate Futenma with Kadena Air Base and demanding the withdrawal of the foreign minister's statement. The town of Kadena has decided to hold a rally of the town people on Nov. 7.

Prime Minister Hatoyama spoke of an "exhaustive cleanup of the postwar government" in his policy speech. The change of administration should be a golden opportunity to review the Japan-U.S. relationship. Is it not also time to conduct an exhaustive cleanup of diplomacy toward the U.S.?

(6) Security situation in Afghanistan deteriorating; Taliban attack on UN facility kills 10

ASAHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
October 29, 2009

Taliban militants stormed a guesthouse being used by UN staff on Oct. 28, killing 10 people. The security situation in Afghanistan will inevitably deteriorate as the anti-government armed group has revealed its intention to continue to carry out terrorist acts in

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the future. Attacks by the Taliban are likely to affect the outcome of the upcoming presidential runoff election and activities by foreign troops stationed in the nation, as well as Japan's strategy to expand its civilian support.

The attack took place in an area where UN-related offices and guest houses, such as those of the World Food Program (WFP), are located. A guest house used by Japanese staff of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is also situated there. However, it was impossible for people unaffiliated to the UN to recognize the attacked guesthouse as an UN-related facility because there was no UN flag or signboard displayed.

Unfavorable wind for Japan's Afghanistan reconstruction aid measures

Taking the attack on the UN guesthouse seriously, a senior Foreign Ministry official said: "Although suicide bombings have occurred in the past, an attack on an international organization is unprecedented. We must continue to watch the situation carefully." JICA, which handles Japanese government aid in Afghanistan, had 30 staff members of its Kabul office stay at home.

The Hatoyama administration has stepped up its efforts to put together assistance measures for Afghanistan as a challenge for the Hatoyama administration to tackle within 100 days of its launch. But the deteriorating security situation in the nation might stand in the way of its efforts.

In his policy speech on Oct. 26, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama specified three assistance measures for the Afghanistan: (1) agricultural support; (2) vocational training for former militants; and (3) reinforcement of police functions. Regarding vocational training, the government is considering the possibility of providing aid in cooperation with the UN.

The vocational training plan is aimed at helping former Taliban insurgents have a way to make a living and pull them away from the

Taliban group, as part of efforts to prevent the security situation from deteriorating further. Terrorist attacks, like the one on Oct. 28, will make it difficult for donor countries to provide assistance.

The attack is also expected to have an impact on the upcoming presidential runoff election. The Japanese government intends to discuss its new assistance measures with the next Afghan government and then translate the measures into reality. Given this, the government is looking forward to the inauguration of a legitimate new government.

In its budgetary request for fiscal 2010, the Foreign Ministry requested 10 billion yen in aid for Afghanistan - the same amount as in the initial fiscal 2009 budget compiled under the Aso administration. The ministry intends to increase the amount when a package of support measures is finalized. But the premise is that public order should be maintained to a certain extent. A senior Foreign Ministry official expressed concern that if the situation becomes worse, the ministry might find it difficult to convince the Finance Ministry and other related government agencies to accept its explanation of why the amount should be increased.

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